Tetragrammaton Fragments

June 2014

#234

The UFO Membership

David Branstetter
Mailing Address: **4212 Frisse Ave., Evansville, IN 47714**
Email: *strawmancomics@gmail.com*
Website: http://www.strawmancomics.com/

Jason Bullock
Mailing Address: **P. O. Box 2684, Loganville, GA 30052**
Email: *herocentralstudio@gmail.com*
Website: http://www.herocentral.org/

J. Kevin Carrier
Mailing Address: **1800 Leven Lane, Milford, OH 45150**
Email: *jkcarrier@aol.com*
Website: http://www.webcomicsnation.com/jkcarrier/

Sam Gafford *(UFO Emergency Chairman)*
Mailing Address: **624 Metacom Ave., #103, Warren, RI 02885**
Email: *lordshazam@yahoo.com*
Website: http://ultharpress.com

Rob Imes *(UFO Chairman)*
Mailing Address: **13510 Cambridge #307, Southgate, MI 48195**
Email: *robimes@yahoo.com*
Website: https://www.facebook.com/groups/ditkomania/

Larry Johnson
Mailing Address: **31 Greenbrook Rd., Hyde Park, MA 02136**
Email: *LewBrown75@yahoo.com*
Website: http://larryjohnsonartist.com/

Alan Sissom
Mailing Address: **P. O. Box 92, Whiteland, IN 46184**
Email: *a1960boomer@yahoo.com*
Website: https://www.facebook.com/alan.sissom

Steve Keeter *(Honorary Member)*
Mailing Address: **706 F Street, Apt. 94, Chula Vista, CA 91910**
Email: *keeter46@netscape.net*
Website: http://www.youtube.com/user/ClassicComicsMan

Jim Main *(Honorary Member)*
Mailing Address: **13 Valley View Rd., Brookfield, CT 06804**
Email: *jmain44@aol.com*
Website: http://www.mainenterprises.ecrater.com/

TETRAGRAMMATON FRAGMENTS #234
FIRST PRINTING: June 2014. This edition is **the PDF version of the newsletter,** printed by Rob Imes (contact info above). **PRICE**: $2.50 postpaid in the USA.
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CHAIRMAN CHATTER

Welcome back to another issue of the UFO Newsletter! I hope that everyone has been enjoying their summer. I'd like to say that I've been trying to use my free time to *create*, but the truth is that I've been eagerly using most of my free time to *read*. My shelves are full of books that I've had little time to do more than glance at, and I hope to spend more time in the years that are left to me to get more of them read. I also look forward to reading more comics and zines, especially from the UFO members.

The front cover of this issue is by UFO member **Alan Sissom**. The back cover, featuring *Gorgo*, is by small-press cartoonist **Javier Hernandez**. (He had contributed it for *Ditkomania* #93, but I ran out of room to include it. A color version appears in the PDF of *DM* #93, which was emailed to all UFO members a few weeks ago.)

George Mink's application to join the group was voted down unanimously by the membership. I am hoping to increase our numbers, however, so if anyone reading this would like to join the UFO, let me know.

The only UFO memberzines released since last issue were ***Ditkomania* #93** and ***Tales of Fantasy* #64**. Alan Sissom did send out *Collectors' Club Newsletter* #106 to the members, but it is not a memberzine since the issue lacks the UFO symbol and checklist.

The **"must publish a zine by"** dates:
BRANSTETTER: June 2014
BULLOCK: January 2015
CARRIER: June 2014
GAFFORD: September 2014
IMES: May 2015
JOHNSON: April 2015
SISSOM: November 2014

(I have granted publishing extensions to Branstetter and Carrier.)

"Must write" column for TF #235: **J. Kevin Carrier**.

The deadline for next issue (#235) is **August 10th.** It's that time of year again where the members decide who will be the UFO Chairman. If anyone would like to run for the position of Chairman, then you may campaign for the position in your column next issue. The vote will occur in September and the results of the election will be announced in *T-Frags* #236. I'll be running again for Chairman, but if anyone else is interested in the job, feel free to throw your hat in the ring!

Here is the **annual dues** calendar for each member:

BRANSTETTER: paid until March 2015
BULLOCK: paid until May 2015
CARRIER: paid until July 2014
GAFFORD: paid until July 2014
IMES: paid until February 2015
JOHNSON: paid until March 2015
SISSOM: paid until December 2014

That's it for now. Keep creating!

-- Rob Imes, UFO CHAIRMAN

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The UFO Constitution

Article One: Becoming a Member

To become a member of the **United Fanzine Organization** co-op, one must inform the Chairman of one's **application** and send a copy of his/her comic or zine to all members listed on the UFO roster. The membership will then **vote** on acceptance. (If the applicant's zine or comic is available to view online, the applicant may email the members a link to the pages for evaluation in lieu of mailing a printed copy; however, applicants should send a printed copy to members who are not regularly online or who specifically request the applicant to mail them a printed copy.) If a majority of the membership votes "yes" on the applicant's admission, he/she becomes a member. Applicants who receive a majority of "no" votes may apply again for membership at a later date.

Article Two: Membership Requirements

(a) All members are required to **publish a minimum of 20 pages** of new material (comic or text) per year. Web zines with equivalent material will count toward membership requirements. There is no maximum limit to the number of titles one may publish as memberzines.

(b) Each member is required to **mail a free copy of each memberzine**, as it is published, to all other co-op members. Publishers of webcomics should send hard copy versions of their online comics to the membership (as not all members may have internet access). Digital publishers must send an email to each member notifying them of their webzine. (Since webzines are free to all, those publishing print zines are not required to mail their zines to those publishing only on the web, but are encouraged to do so.)

(c) Each member is required to **submit a column** to at least every other issue of the UFO Newsletter (*Tetragrammaton Fragments*). The purpose of member columns is first to review the memberzines that one has received and second discuss club business (such as voting on amendments and applicants). *T-Frag* contributions are limited to a maximum of 10 pages each issue per member, unless the member receives the Chairman's consent to allow a higher page count for that particular issue of the newsletter.

(d) **Member dues are $20.00 annually**. These dues help to cover co-op promotion, and printing and mailing of the bi-monthly UFO Newsletter. If a member falls behind in his/her annual dues and/or publishing requirements, the member may ask the Chairman for a brief extension. If the member is dropped for failing to meet publishing requirements or newsletter participation, any remaining money in their account will be used toward their subscription to the newsletter.

(e) The UFO is limited to **25 members**. Others applying after the limit is reached will be placed on a waiting list and considered for membership in the order in which they applied. Waitlisters have the option of submitting a column to the UFO newsletter but they are not required to do so. It is at the discretion of each UFO member whether to send their memberzines to those on the waitlist since it is not required. UFO members are allowed to be members of other co-ops while they are in the UFO.

(f) **Honorary Members** are persons who have been voted into that position by a majority vote of the members. They may contribute to the newsletter, but have no voting power, are not required to pay the annual dues, and are not required to meet publication requirements. It is at the discretion of each member whether to send an Honorary Member a copy of their memberzine or not, as it is not required.

Article Three: Memberzine Requirements

(a) Each UFO publication must carry the **UFO symbol** on one of its four covers (exterior or interior front and back), preferably the front exterior cover. Webzines must display the symbol on their front page prominently.

(b) Each UFO memberzine (print or digital) is required to carry the **UFO Checklist**. Members may alter the wording in the Checklist as it appears in their own publications, as long as the changes are accurate and non-detrimental to those listed. (For minis or zines of 16 pages or less, an Abbreviated Checklist may be used, with simply the titles and prices of the books, and the names and addresses of the respective publishers.)

(c) The UFO does not **censor** its material, however responsibility and use of good taste and common sense in publishing are encouraged. The Chairman must publish member columns in the UFO newsletter unedited as long as they are within the page-count limit and not illegal or obscene in content.

Article Four: The UFO Chairman

(a) **Annual election**: A Chairman shall be elected in September, by a majority vote of the members, to a one-year term commencing in November. (Those running for the position of Chairman should start their campaigns no later than the July issue of the newsletter.)

(b) **Responsibilities**: An elected Chairman has the duties of editing and publishing the bi-monthly UFO newsletter, conducting the general co-op business, managing member dues accounts, or delegating these affairs. In consideration of the time and effort expended in the production of the UFO newsletter, a newly elected Chairman will be allowed two years -- dating from the publication of this first NL -- to publish an issue of his/her regular small press book, instead of the one zine a year requirement for the other members.

(c) **Emergency Chairman**: It is important that the UFO Chairman appoint an Emergency Chairman immediately upon assuming office. The Emergency Chairman shall assume the office of UFO Chairman if the elected Chairman resigns the position prior to the next election, or if the elected Chairman fails to publish the newsletter for more than 100 consecutive days.

(d) **Removal**: There is no limit to the amount of terms a Chairman may hold. The Chairman may be removed from office only by a majority vote. A Chairman who decides not to run for another term should make this known to the members prior to the publication of the July newsletter, so that other members may have time to announce their campaigns for the position.

Strange Frequencies

Opinions and Editorial
by David Branstetter

News:

First I want to say that I am eager to read UFO publications and contribute to the group in any way I can. That being said I have been SUPER busy these last few months. I've attended 5 cons, joined a BNI group, and my business has really picked up. I'm in the process of moving my office space into a smaller room, which requires a certain degree of culling. Also I think it's safe to announce that we're expecting a new baby soon. YAY!!!

I'm thankful to Rob Imes for extending the "must publish" deadline for me. Issue 11 is the most difficult project I've attempted to create and I'm certain the time I'm putting into it will be worth the trouble. In the meantime I'm going to be focusing on putting together a collection of the online strips. I've done this before and it was called the "Color Special". It has since gone out print and I've more than doubled the strips that now exist. So I'm going to repackage that material and add the new stuff to make a very cool, fun comic strip book. I'm still having trouble deciding whether or not to reformat the landscape strips into a portrait format. I really didn't like turning the book in the previous version. My perfectionist mind set won't allow me to release it as is...

I do want to do a few extensive reviews of member materials, including "Beforia" which Dan Burke submitted months ago. I'm sad to hear about the passing of Don Ensign. I have a few feelings that I wanted to express about the situation that I just haven't had time to put down on paper.

Working the Circuit

I did want to take a minute to talk about the convention circuit that I've been working and share a few tips that I've learned in the meantime.

1. People at Comic Cons Don't Want Your Comic Book

Occasionally I'll find one or two people at a show who are TOTALLY into what I'm doing. I love these customers. My old business model depended on finding people who read comics and heavily selling to them. If I was lucky I might be able to pull 50 in sales over a three day weekend. That barely covers table, let alone hotel costs. That's just bad math. It's not sustainable.

I had a vendor come up to me once (with a wad of cash in his hand) "Hey if you want to know the secret of making money at con, it's selling prints." I immediately balked at this idea. ME? Sell out? I'm in this for ART! However the comment stuck with me. I started noticing at shows I'd have my portfolio out and people would comment on the art and ask how much my prints cost. I'd say "Uh no... those are originals and they go for 100" or whatever. They'd say, "Oh if you had a print I'd pay 10 for that". So I started testing the waters. I found that

the Doctor Who prints I made were selling like hotcakes! I was suddenly turning a 2 dollar investment into an 8 dollar profit!

2. People Do Want To Buy Prints

Selling prints can offset the cost of doing a show and even help you make a profit. It makes sense. It's easier to sell someone on a concept that they already like verses the concept of something that they MIGHT like. Plus there's no time commitment involved in reading your book. That's not to say that you should drop everything and not create a comic book, or that you should stop selling it. No, use the prints to draw in customers and if there's a good dialogue you might be able to upsell your comic at the same time.

It's a popular trend and it may be approaching burn out. So tread lightly.

3. Cheap Sketches

I've been surprised as of late that shows will make or break depending on how I price artwork. I'd been holding on to a pretty good Spider-Man drawing for 10 years. I had it priced somewhere around 75. When I dropped it to 50 it was suddenly gone! Money in the bank! I've been asked to do sketches as low as 10 dollars and as high as 20. That hour or so that you're working on the sketch is better pay than not getting anything at all. If you're keeping busy it shows that you're not desperate. When you look desperate people avoid you like the plague.

4. Presentation

I know my table doesn't always look the most organized but I do know that when I see something that's put together well it draws me in. I bumped into someone at Indianapolis who happened to have a degree in table presentation. I kid you not! She came by and did a mini makeover. Even though I thought I had made improvements to my presentation she immediately pointed out that she didn't even notice the comics sitting at my table. Had a potential comic purest customer walked by they wouldn't have seen my book. www.chrisandgin.com

5. Know Your Show

I've made this mistake twice and I've really paid for it. I invested in some new display racks for the Small Press and Alternative Comics Expo (S.P.A.C.E. for short) and I was surprised that my sales numbers were really low. Then it occurred to me, these guys want comics. That's why they're here. Not celebrities, not Marvel/DC, and certainly not gimmicks. I realize now that as much of an indie property that Straw Man is.... maybe S.P.A.C.E. is not a good fit for that show. First of all the book isn't finished so people who have invested in Straw Man have had to wait FOREVER to get the whole story. After you've seen the same person for years on end I can see where it would get a little old hat. Then you factor in the most obvious problem that indie fans don't want to read super hero books. I didn't realize that until this year. Indie people love well designed, done

in one, true life stories or odd one off books. They're running away from superheroes because they grew out of that sort of thing and moved on to indie books. Why go back to an inheriately inferior product?

I've also found that if a show is brand new you also run the risk of an uniniated audience and unexperienced show runners. For instance at Indy Pop Con.... nobody and I mean nobody did well at the show. It took some well established vendors three days just to earn their table. Just because a show is "big" doesn't mean it has the audience to support it. When deciding whether or not to put down 150 dollars for a table check to see how other vendors did the year before.

6. Work Your Local Scene

I can't emphasize this enough. I've gotten a lot of love locally. I did more in 3 hours at Free Comic Book day than I did the entire time I was at S.P.A.C.E. By narrowing the focus of your potential customers you can become more visible and attractive. Being a very good artist out of 5 pretty good artists is an easier sell than drowning in a sea of super talented starving artists. Attendance might be lower but so will your competition.

Think outside of the con circuit. You might have better luck at a local festival. It could be a cheaper booth price and you'll end up being the ONLY guy (or gal) selling comics. You'll hear this conversation a lot, "My nephew really likes comics. I think I'll buy him one. Do you have a first issue?"

7. Lower Your Costs

This could mean splitting a table, sharing hotel rooms, or carpooling. Working locally also means not having to pay for a hotel. Maybe you know someone in a distant city who will let you sleep on their couch. Think outside of the box and you'll be saving yourself a ton of money.

8. Think Unique

If you have a trinket or small cutesy item chances are you'll sell out quickly. This is a great way to capitalize on your female audience and it'll leave a lasting impression of your table. At a big con you're likely to see 5 very good Doctor Who prints with the SAME source image used for it. If you've got a hand made Doctor Who plush doll you'll sell those in a heart beat. Try to think unique.

Well that's all the advice I've got. I hope it helps you in your future endeavours.

Send you Questions or Comments to:
David Branstetter
4212 Frisse Ave.
Evansville, IN 47714
strawmancomics@gmail.com

From the
"Line It Is Drawn" # 188
May 2nd, 2014

"I like it very much."
--Joyce Brabner

So uh... I hear you got a new movie out. That's great man. I was in a movie too you know. Made Paul Giamatti a star.
I thought that was "Sideways" ...
Whatever.
The critics hate your movie, man. They say there's too much going on, too many plot points and shallow character development. Which isn't too surprising.
Woody Allen once said there's no art to superhero films.
"The films are about technology."
That it's all about using comics to showcase technology and not about using the technology to tell a good comic book story.
It's all surface level stuff.
You've been coopted man. Using people's positive memories to sell a facsimile of the real deal.
Yeah, but this movie's got spider-man in it.
2014

AND ANOTHER THING!
(or SAM SEZ #10)

A column for the United Fanzine Organization newsletter, Tetragrammaton Fragments from Sam Gafford, 624 Metacom Ave., Apt #103, Warren, RI 02885. Email: lordshazam@yahoo.com

Website: ultharpress.com May 2014

It was with a great deal of sadness that I heard of the passing of our friend, Don Ensign. I might not have agreed with some of his views but you could never deny his energy, enthusiasm and love for comics. He will be missed but we are the better for having him in our midst.

I admit that there seems to be an awful lot of death around lately. Not just in the world-wide sense but in the more immediate as well. Since the beginning of the year, I have learned that two close friends (neither all that much older than I) have been diagnosed with cancer. In addition, my wife has several patrons at the library where she works who have passed away this year as well. Locally, a horror movie co-host (whom I never had the good fortune to meet in person but whose work I enjoyed regularly) died suddenly from cancer at the (to me) young age of 51. As I turn 52 this year, such events give me more pause than they used to. I am more aware of the passage of time these days and the inevitable feeling that there are fewer days ahead than there are behind.

As I think about Don, I wonder about our group itself. As of the last TF, we have 7 active members and 2 honorary members. I do not think that it is a leap of deduction to say that all of us are probably in the same age group. As we pass along, what will become of the group? And of small press in general? These are the topics that command my thoughts these days and I confess that I have no clear answer.

That we need more new members, preferably younger ones, is self-evident. The question, as always, is how to attract them. Our ever

suffering chairman, Rob Imes, sends out many free copies of the newsletter every issue but our ranks do not swell. Rob and Larry Johnson produce some of the best zines available today and yet we are still only 7. These are questions that I have pondered for a long time but they are beyond me.

Small Press is a fragmented place now. Back in the 80s, there was a stronger sense of community or, at least, as far as I knew. Today, the community is in different places. Some old timers like myself hold onto the old ways of producing comics and communicating while others embrace the new technologies. Their zines are online and their communities are in forums and blogs. I have begun to wonder if perhaps in sticking to my old ways, I am perhaps cutting myself off from this new community? Rather than complaining that there is no one here in the coliseum, I should look instead in the salons.

"I grow old, I grow old,
"I shall wear the bottoms of my trousers rolled."
—T.S. Eliot

REVIEWS

TALES OF FANTASY #64—Larry Johnson

One might have expected Larry to take it easy after the 63rd issue of ToF but that is certainly not the case!

This issue contains no less than three stories from Larry and a reprint from 1991. All are high quality and enjoyable. But my favorite is probably "Tales of the BSI: ROBOT".

Two BSI scientists are tasked with reviving an abandoned project from 60 years ago and accidentally bring a weaponized robot back to life. Not surprisingly, it goes on a destructive rampage and it looks like nothing can defeat it without causing the atomic core to explode.

This story, to me, seems a bit unusual for Larry because it is unusually violent. Several people are killed by the robot (similar to the 'martian death ray' from the 1950s classic WAR OF THE WORLDS.

I liked Dan Burke's inks on this issue and his strong use of blacks almost seemed to me to be reminiscent of 50s sci-fi comics. It's nice to see a bit of a different look here and I think it suited the story

well.

The second story, "The Growth", is your basic sci-fi tale and, despite being handled well, is a bit of an old chestnut.

"Not School Work" is a great little auto-biographical story from Larry about his time in high school and the impact his art teacher had upon Larry's life. It's a touching story and makes one think about how much of a difference people can make in each other's lives and often never even know it. We can all probably look back and identify someone like Larry's art teacher who helped us choose our paths in life.

The 1991 reprint is an installment of "Mysterious Myths" called "The Haunted Scarf" and it is an fun little story that manages to tell an entire story without any dialogue.

I'm glad I know Larry. My life would have been far gloomier without the pleasure of reading his work.

DITKOMANIA #93—Rob Imes

Now brings a special issue of the most excellent magazine devoted to Ditko's two Charlton monsters: Gorgo and Konga! This is a delight for me to read and much interesting information is related. It's amazing how Ditko and Gill were able to create such great comics out of such limited concepts. And I always find it interesting to read different viewpoints on the same material. My only minor quibble is that it got weary reading the same introductory information in many of the articles but that is a small nitpick. There really were no items in this zine that I did not enjoy and it would be hard to pick any favorites. It is very pleasing to see such luminaries as Robby Reed, Martin Hirchak and Stephen Bissette in these pages. I wonder, though, why are the reviews placed first and then the articles? I wonder if the opposite might not be more effective?

It's my hope that, when the next newsletter comes around, we'll have more zines to talk about. Perhaps even one of my own. Like anything, continued activity breeds more activity. We all have something to bring to the group so let's bring it!

Whoops! Outta room! Until next time!

SISSOMISMS #2

June 2014, for "T-Frags" #234

By Alan Sissom

Here I am, folks, back again with another attempt to catch up with all of my responsibilities, and finding most times that I'm running *just out of reach* behind where I actually need to be! How odd! Still, things are beginning to look up a bit. I've just put together the latest issue of ***Collectors' Club Newsletter*** (#106) after six months of everything going not quite right. The issue is mostly wrapped up into its mailing label and ready to be taken to the post office. Waiting just in the wings is the next issue of my publication for the UFO itself, ***The Imagination Link*** and the deadline for its completion will be June 15th. So, finally, everything connected with the creative side of my life is beginning to move forward again, leaving only my column here in the pages of ***Tetragrammaton Fragments*** needing to be written and submitted in order to bring my responsibilities and plans truly back to where they should be!

Well! Okay, then! Pausing only to take a hopeful gulp that nothing more will go wrong, here goes...

So far since joining the UFO I feel I've merely limped along, producing only one column that appeared in ***T-Frags*** #232 that did not once mention the other publications in the UFO family at all, despite that being my original intention. Quite frankly, when I consider all of the publications that have been sent to me over the last six months or so, I feel slightly over-whelmed when I think of trying to write something about all of them at once. They are all top-notch!

Here's the blunt truth: all of you so far have taught me via example aspects in creating ***The Imagination Link*** that have been lacking in ways I'd never have considered before, at least not without having seen how the other members of the UFO family were handling things. That's why I've been wanting to tackle reviewing ALL of the various UFO titles, because I've been

gaining insights from each and every one of the UFO titles. But there are just so many for a newbie like me to deal with in one sitting! So: thank you all for bringing me up-to-date by mailing me copies of your publications, and rest assured that I'll get around to saying something about each as fairly as I can, as soon as I can. But, in order to get started, I'm going to handle the last two UFO titles properly and then just keep up with any newer releases from this point on instead of trying to tackle too much too soon. Over time, if other publications don't appear, I'll dip back into the bag and review them one or two at a time. Bear with me here, folks!

DITKOMANIA #93 has been the latest fanzine to land in my mailbox, and — since Rob Imes' ***Ditkomania*** was also the first UFO title I'd ever encountered before becoming a part of the family myself — I find that particular, if momentary, coincidence very appropriate in order to get myself started here. When I first became aware of the fanzine, my first thought was to wonder how it was possible to carry on a publication dedicated to only one artist — whether it was someone as important as Steve Ditko or not — for what was at that point 91 issues! Well, I'm happy to say that, after reading two more issues I don't have to wonder any more. I'm impressed with ***Ditkomania*** on a lot of different levels. The format ("digest" sized, 44 b&w interior pages, with color covers) presents a very professional and readable package. The color artwork pieces that appear on front and back are so appealing that I'm driven to wonder what I might have missed by not having seen earlier issues — which is quite an accomplishment in simple promotion if one pauses to consider such a direct kind of effectiveness!

Since each issue takes on a different subject in connection with Steve Ditko's massive career, I've been intrigued to wonder what subject might be used next. The surprise here is that I had no clue how little I've known about Mr. Ditko's entire comics output! This one is focused upon what is referred to as "Ditko's

Monsters" which doesn't surprise me as much as did the last two issues of this fanzine. As someone who has from time to time collected various of the anthology titles from the Marvel and Charlton groups of comics, I am keenly aware of Ditko's voluminous output of "monster comics." But — with some little regret — I have to admit that I was never that aware of the two comics characters featured here: KONGA and GORGO; one a version of King Kong and the other a stand-in for a "Godzilla" type movie creation; both originally published by Charlton Comics and based upon licensed movie productions.

After reading all of the articles, I really feel like I've missed out having never heard of these two comics before! It turns out that I'm in luck and can rectify my dismal state of ignorance in a very satisfactory way, as this particular issue of ***Ditkomania*** is perfectly timed to make fans aware of two reprint titles from IDW, called ***Ditko Monsters: Konga*** and ***Ditko Monsters: Gorgo***.

(How strange! It's almost as if Rob Imes decided on these two "Ditko Monsters" to feature in this issue of his fanzine directly because of these two reprint titles, but surely that's way too much of a coincidence to be true. All I can say for certain is that the celebrated Mr. Imes has done me a good turn by doing so and bringing this unexpected bounty of Ditko treasure within reach of my grasping hands. Why, that almost gives Mr. Imes godlike powers directly connected to the cosmic source of all that is Ditko worship! Praise the Hoary Hosts of Hoggoth!)

The articles are fairly divided between the two monsters, as well as the past publication history of both beyond these ***Ditko Monsters*** titles. I'm grateful to know about these two characters, and I'll be following up and purchasing the two reprint titles, count on it. And that — if you think about it — means that ***Ditkomania*** #93 has been successful in its purest intention, if only at least in this case, in bringing about what it has intended: furthering the appreciation of Steve Ditko's material in a very real and current way!

TETRAGRAMMATON FRAGMENTS #233 (last issue, naturally) appeared prior to Rob Imes' wonderful publication, so I'll pause here to share a couple of thoughts. First off, I'm in awe of UFO chairman Rob Imes' ability to keep everything very much on schedule every issue! It certainly seems that Rob has successfully mastered the bi-monthly circus that comes with such a regularly appearing fanzine. I haven't been as lucky with my own publications lately, so I'm looking to T-Frags as a reminder that it can indeed be done consistently and successfully!

This issue was appropriately devoted to the memory of Don Ensign. There is not much I myself can say in memory of him, except to say I feel very cheated by the very event of his passing itself! Don Ensign, I never really got to know you! I'm glad I met you through the confines of postal mailings and brief Facebook comments. I wish we could have had a lot more! My fellow members here are so, so lucky to have had so much more time with you!

One positive thing in connection with the Don Ensign tribute is that — due to the cover art of T-Frags #233 — I've become Facebook friends with its artist, Justice Carmon. So, even as one connection gets lost, I've picked up another. Life goes on despite the losses and regrets.

TALES OF FANTASY #64 was the newest issue of UFO titles that arrived for me prior to ***Ditkomania***, and with a very similar format (except 40 b&w interior pages in this case). The previous issue of #63, featuring Larry Johnson's interesting "ZOOY" character, came at the same time, giving me a nice comparative view of the title. The current issue had no Zooy appearances apart from the letters section in the back of the issue.

This newest particular issue was more a "Science Fiction Anthology," reminding me very favorably of comparisons with the first six or so issues of the Fifties' EC titles Weird Science and Weird Fantasy. I can give no greater praise by making this

comparison, as many of you can no doubt attest!

The first two comics features were pure old-style sci-fi entertainment at its best! The first story, "Robot" felt — I swear! — like a very well done Fifties movie classic comics adaptation of material as good and memorable as something like *The Day the Earth Stood Still*. In fact, one scene gives a very specific nod to that classic, important film. However, it was more specifically the second story, "The Growth" that really made me think of the early EC science fiction titles in the way I mentioned above. I love reading such stories that begin by making me wonder just what exactly might be going on in the tale, until finally realizing by the end that it was the last thing I would have ever considered! Awesome. There were two other stories featuring a humorous take on Fantasy Mythology via "Mysterious Myths," which were also nice, but the more I think about this entire issue's contents the more I've come to realize that my favorite part was an autobiographical comics story about Larry's own past experience as a growing artist, called "Not School Work!" I love taking peeks at other artists' experiences, and reading about Larry's experiences as an artist in school was interesting on so many levels. In a way, I was reminded of Harvey Pekar's ***American Splendor*** stories. I hope Larry decides to give us such windows into his past again!

Well, that's it for this column, folks! I'm saving a few more select words about how the various UFO titles have shaped the changes I'll be applying to my own publication ***THE IMAGINATION LINK*** in order to bring the subject up in the next issue of that title of mine in about a month or so with the release of #49. I hope to see many more issues of the wonderful titles representing the UFO family, and I hope to be back here in two months with another look at the output of my new UFO affiliation! See you then!

— Alan Sissom

Tales of the UFO

Larry Johnson
31 Greenbrook Rd.
Hyde Park, MA 02136
Website: Larryjohnsonartist.com
Email: LewBrown75@yahoo.com

DITKOMANIA #93: In the summer of 1963, as a nine-year-old budding comics artist, studying every bit of cartooning I could get my hands on, I came across three comic books that would have a lasting influence on me. They were Spider-Man #5 (the first issue of that series I bought – which also introduced me to Doctor Doom and the Fantastic Four. I literally read this one to death; I think if I put it on Ebay it would go for $4.00.), Tales to Astonish #48 (a coverless issue picked up at the local mom and pop market for 5 cents!) featuring a five page tale entitled, "The Little Green Man," and one more coverless comic Gorgo #18 which had a tale of the reptilian monster and his mother versus some plankton beings.

The first two had art credits for Steve Ditko, and I could recognize his distinctive style in the Gorgo comic too. One of the first comic books I remember was a 1959 issue of Tales of Suspense (#12) featuring his "I Must Find Those Who Lurk Below" credited to this mysterious Ditko as well. As anyone who has followed my comics over the years can tell, this artist's work has had a profound influence on my own approach to storytelling. I was even copying faces out of that particular Gorgo comic in one of my comics I did at age 10.

All this nostalgia flooded into me after reading this latest issue of Ditkomania, featuring Gorgo and his companion monster Konga! These were perhaps the most unique Charlton publications of the 1960s. In fact, after reading this issue I had to dig out my copy of Fantastic Giants and read their premiere adventures (the movie adaptations, to enhance my enjoyment of all the observations and analysis the articles offered).

I must admit that a few years ago I wrote an essay on Gorgo for my series of 1960s comic books for Larry Blake's Kevin Cool Comics. This series wasn't meant to be definitive; it was more of an introduction to these comics and a recollection for the fans of such. My article on Gorgo dealt with not only Ditko's take on the monster but all the other artists who worked on the series as well.

After reading Mike Tuz's assessment of Craig Yoe's reprint edition of Gorgo I'm considering purchasing it. I did look at a copy in a comics shop and I liked the matte finish paper, reminiscent of newsprint. And I must say I like this kind of presentation of the material. Blake Bell's sequential volumes of Ditko's Charlton output from Fantagraphics adhere to this kind of presentation as well. And I agree that the HD glossy paper enhancement takes away from the experience. I would suggest that these comics were originally produced with an aim for a certain mix of inks, paper and printing to create a unique product (just like their forefathers/cousins in the Sunday newspapers).

And even Charlton's admittedly crappy printing job cannot detract from the beauty of Ditko's storytelling talents. 1961 was a peak year in the artists' development; each page of Gorgo and Konga is a delight in design, composition and atmosphere. Especially in the first Gorgo story I would categorize the art as "elegant." Looking over this early effort in the series, compared to when I became first introduced to Gorgo (#18), I can see that the latter has a more rushed look, less finished and refined.

The last time I saw the film (I have a VHS tape) I liked it, thought it was a fine effort for what it was, but I have to agree with Mike's assessment here, about the pacing and attention to detail that Joe Gill and Steve Ditko gave to this tale. Movie adaptations in comics were not new at this time. What was unique, however, was the continuing series spawned from the original version and, indeed, there's a lot of fun in these comics, fueled by Cold War sensibilities even satire! The latter aspect is explored in "The Wit and Whimsy of Gorgo" by Nick Caputo.

Martin Hirchak's KUNGA raises an interesting question about Marvel Comics jumping

on the bandwagon, most likely influenced by Steve Ditko's Konga work at Charlton. Martin suffuses his article with a lot of facts and a time line and raises questions in an editorial manner. Throughout, while reading this, I kept asking, "Just what was the plot of this tale, and did it adhere with any of the concepts dealt with in the Charlton series? How did it differ?" The only indication I get of Kunga's unique story line here was in the form of the panels reproduced at the end of the article. Obviously the creature was a visitor from another world, a typical Stan Lee-penned story – ala – us flawed Earth People could learn something here from this advanced being, but we're just too aggressive/stupid/prejudiced, etc. All well and good but I somehow would have liked this information chronicled in the article itself. That way the panels would serve as an illustration for the point. This piece, I can tell, relies a good deal on research and detail that is a traditional fit for a fanzine of this nature.

Kurt Kimball's "And Konga Was His Name-O!" eschews the usual two column format of Ditkomania and works as an "open" – "light" piece, much like you'd see in the old weekly magazines like Life and Look. This is the kind of thing that this fanzine could really use; a pictorial piece – since, of course it is dedicated to the storytelling/art of Steve Ditko. This features the art that Ditko created for the adaptation versus stills from the film itself. It really gives you an idea of how much more freedom working in the comics medium has over filmmaking at the time (and of course this has a lot to do with the days before CGI and limited budgets too). And of course the film could have profited from a good art director as well. The premiere issue of Konga (which I read recently) was, again, a beautifully designed effort, each panel an engaging piece of art. Considering the fact that Ditko adapted this story BEFORE seeing the film and did such a good job of it is testimony to a masterful storyteller. No wonder I was taken with his work as such an early age!

According to Stephen R. Bissett both Konga and Gorgo were big sellers; rivaling other companies' science fiction and fantasy titles of the day.

I also enjoyed reading about "Creepy Presents: Steve Ditko." Ditko's Warren black and white work is an exercise in various mediums and approaches from line to wash, to pencil. I must admit that I have most of this material in its original newsprint editions. Here is a study in the best of black and white story telling. What a time we live in! We have affordable reprints (via scanning and Photoshop) presented as closely as it was when they were first published.

As I was reading Bryan D. Strand's "Steve Ditko and the Split Image" I kept thinking: "My spider sense is tingling!"

The letters were engaging! I can see readers are enthused and engaged by the works of this prolific artist. And the cover! Wow! For one thing the quality of the glossy stock and flawless color printing puts this book right up there in the trade paperback market! These covers are just the tip of the iceberg as they represent the quality within the pages. I must say I was engaged with all the contents of this book! It's great to read about this artists' craft in specific project like these two movie monster adaptations.

I would like to see a future issue devoted to Steve Ditko's work on a Charlton series like Captain Atom; his original take with Joe Gill, later costume change and how this character compares to other nuclear powered concepts at the time like Doctor Solar and Nukla (whom Ditko had a hand in as well).

And another aspect of Ditko's work I've rarely seen covered in this title has been his work in Charlton's Ghost Titles – flagship Ghostly Tales and Doctor Graves. This was a fertile ten year period and worth commenting on. There's a wealth of material to be explored here. I wrote an article some years ago about Ditko's "Innovative Layout" from this era. I'd like to see some more on these lines.

Who would have thought we'd be studying these "funny books" 50 years after they came out? Ephemeral entertainment, huh? Thank you Rob for consistently giving such good attention to Ditkomania, a real gem in the UFO pantheon of titles!

THE MYSTERY & ADVENTURE SERIES REVIEW #48: Fred Woodworth sent me the latest issue of his DYI publication and what an enjoyable read it was! I was pleasantly surprised to see a long article by my friend Mike Tuz: "The Birth of a Middle-Aged Science Fiction Fan" in which he describes his adult introduction to books geared to the juvenile market. It really made me want to seek out some of these books he mentioned. In fact, right after reading this, I was at a local thrift shop nosing around and saw a few Hardy Boys and Nancy Drew mysteries which I passed up. When I got home I remembered that I had in my possession four books from the "Dig Allen Space Explorer" series (circa 1960). I'd picked them up a few years ago at a library sale and hadn't read them yet. I dived into "Captives in Space" written by Joseph Greene and found it to be an entertaining and enjoyable read. Mr. Greene has a straightforward style, not overly embellished with exciting adjectives and while reading this story I was reminded of the Rocky Jones Space Ranger TV series of the 1950s. I figured that if I'm fond of Jimmy Olsen and Superboy and Legion of Superheroes stories from the 1960s, the science and approach in this tale isn't that much different.

Mike and I share similar tastes regarding popular entertainment that we experienced in our youth. "Escape into times of respectful morality rather than those of surly decadence." What a great line! I realized how much my own concepts and approach have been influenced by the "pop culture" of that time.

And in "Hunting for Hidden Books" by Kent Winslow he mentions the look of modern comic books – "dark, air brushed panels with cold dialog" comparing them to "long, dreadful prison pages of long division." Yowza! I am not quite in the trenches in this modern era of Marvel/DC fare, but I will tell you teaching my comic book class I find my young students have a penchant for Manga comics so I have to familiarize myself with that particular drawing style and approach. I don't quite relate to it, but I must report that they also have enjoyed The Watchmen, and appreciate the 60s issues of Batman I bring to class, not to mention Carl Barks' Uncle Scrooge! They introduce me to new material as well – and me, well, I must be "The Ancient One" because I'm showing them Dick Tracy and Blondie. And I must say that one of my college age students is a big fan of George Herriman's Krazy Kat too! There's hope!

I enjoyed Fred's editorial very much, especially his assessment of books – physical publications – versus the electronic equivalent. Literary literacy? I read recently the results of a poll, that last year only 42% of Americans read a book (this means an entire book, either print or in electronic form). And as for the story of the printer receiving electronic files of things his customers want to see in print – "They've never seen it on paper at all and have no idea what it'll look like and don't care." I find this astonishing having had a long career in newspaper (and commercial work) production. I am very attuned to how something looks in print, especially artwork. And in my DYI production of Tales of Fantasy (in which I print out the cover on my home printer) I am doing a great deal of post scan adjustment and settings to approximate as closely as possible the accurate reproduction of a cover painting. And you know darn well it looks different on the screen than on the paper!

I am very particular when reading a book about the type used and also the leading between the lines. There was the "desk top publishing revolution" of the 1990s when suddenly everyone could be a publisher! But that meant that relying on all the vast capabilities of the computer a lot of people with no design sense (translated as "common sense") started turning out material regardless of how difficult it was to read. It was like sound getting into motion pictures; the technology went crazy! Even mainstream magazine and newspapers suddenly got this infection. Gee, I can put reverse body copy type over a mottled color photograph! Look! I can do my put my copy on my editorial page in a circle and trapezoid shapes! I can do ragged left! I can butt a vertical column line right flush tight against my type! And this is in the New York Times! Guess what? There must have been a reader revolt because it has,

for the most part, all gone away!

I applaud Fred's efforts with this book. Using his older technological printing know how he has created an accessible, reader product and the content by the contributors and readers in the letters column are all presented without seeing the "scaffolding."

I like the dimensions of this book, and it takes a real craftsman to come up with a consistent handsomely produced book like this for so long a time! No meddling with the digital print houses, subject to their electronic whims! Fred takes donations, send him a few dollars (no checks) for the recent issues: Fred Woodworth, P.O. Box 3012, Tuscon, AZ 85702.

FADEAWAY #40: This old fashioned side-stapled zine is a real pleasure to read, ostensibly devoted to science fiction and related fields, this time featuring a lengthy article on an old radio show, "Bobby Benson: The Cowboy Kid" by Jack French. It was an informative read, especially learning about Don Knotts' early career. This piece concentrates heavily on the production history of the show, but as I was reading it I kept wondering just what the series was about. Of course it took place on a ranch in the modern day west, but no mention of any of the plots or story lines is included at all. I would like just a little bit of that: "a typical story line involved cattle rustlers, kidnapping, technology, etc." Too often fan-based articles are too heavy on that aspect, and boring to read.

I liked the editor's take on "The Viking Prince" hardback graphic novel collection too. It was a good analytical piece. Here a few plots are mentioned in service to the opinion that they were dull and routine, offsetting the more than competent artwork.

I read with great interest "Remarkable News on the Fanzine Front" where editor Robert Jennings mentions the vast number of downloads that his e-zine from a site devoted to electronic versions of these publications – close to 5000 per issue, yet not one letter of comment or even a note from any of those readers.

Hmmm! Downloads, huh? Then I remembered, just one year before I was reading this Rob Imes had sent me a digital version of Fadeaway, and I had completely forgotten all about it. Sure enough, I checked my file of downloads and there it was. I remember glancing through it and Fadeway looked interesting to me, and I figured I would have to make some time to read it.

But then I forgot all about it. How come? It might very well be that when I physically receive a book in the mail, I open the envelope and there it is in my hands. I have the memory of holding it. I might put it in my "to be read stack" and it actually imposes it's presence on me, since periodically I go through all of this stuff so I'm not cluttered. Every zine I get from UFO members is in this form and I make a mental note that I will write a review of each one of them. It may be my habits, and perhaps others of my age can grasp onto this kind of media storage, but it just goes by me. It may also be the fact that I don't have any other device to read this stuff on other than my home computer, a Dell with a 23 inch screen sitting in my studio. I can read comics and books lying in bed, I can take them with me to the coffee shop and I don't need to load them on any device either. Reading something on the computer takes a special kind of attention. I can work on projects, like Photoshop business, and typing this very column, but reading is something else. Oh, I have no trouble listening to music and old radio shows on the computer or even watching entire movies on You Tube. And you might think well, it's the holding of the book, the smell, the pages, the layout, but I think it may very well be the physical presence of the product itself that draws and keeps my attention.

As for not hearing from all those "e-readers", well, I remember Dan Burke reporting to me about the times I was interviewed on his Art Studio Podcast and him telling me that he had 8000+ downloads. Even though I had mentioned my website on the show (with contact info) I heard NOTHING from any listener. Don't have the time to respond in that form, I guess. Too much stuff going on in the Internet!

My book has a small devoted readership, and with the added benefit of being very responsive. I'm grateful for that.

There's been some discussion in the let-

ters pages of this book about the long length of the lines and readability, and the suggestion of going to two columns. I note that Robert does that for the Bobby Benson article. And it seems to me that one can get away with this "long line" layout if the type is of a certain size and there's a decent amount of leading between the lines. That holds true for the beginning pages of the book, but then you get back to the letters pages when he's gone down a bit in the point size. Here I felt when I got to the end of the line I was "returning the typewriter carriage" each time. It may be the Times Roman face (or clone) that looks like tight soldiers, and perhaps switching to another face like perhaps Garamond that has more of a spread out character look to it that would make those kinds of long lines in the letters column easier to read.

So here's a bit of trivia. In my comic book class Batman is always a topic of discussion, and with that in mind I pulled out a bunch of issues from my collection from the years 1964-1967 to see just how the campy TV show affected the more "serious" Batman that existed in the book in 1964. So I'm reading the letters column in #192 (June 1967 issue) and there's a very well written critical letter of comment on Batman #189 featuring the return of the golden age villain The Scarecrow, and the author? Robert Jennings! Could it possibly be? Small world of comics fans!

Robert takes trades, subscriptions or you can get the current issue by writing a letter of comment. Contact: fabficbks@aol.com.

ODDS AND ENDS: You know as I write this I am in the process of finishing up Tales of Fantasy #65. With each issue I really attempt to put together all the elements with some kind of cohesive form, hoping that they all complement each other. For one thing you have the main body of the book, this time the latest two chapters in The Hand saga, but then all the packaging around it too. My editorial page serves as a preface and I attempt to write this with a bit of background and maybe enough tease to get you into the story. It's a fine line, and then I have the opportunity for some color work on the inside back cover, this time I have an episode of my Dream Diary. And the front and back covers are important too, a painted front cover illustrating a scene from the story, and the back cover is a fantasy illustration.

But the one section of the book that requires a lot of thought and effort, believe it or not is Mails of Fantasy, my letters column. I don't know how many times readers tell me this is the first section they read in the book. I've always profited from the thoughtful criticism of my readers and this time I have five letters. I give some thought on which order to present them so I can orchestrate my response to each reader accordingly. For example one reader may mention a specific point and the next one the same point. In this case I'll address that in the second response. And then you might have a majority of opinion one after the other with an opposing opinion at the end. I try to write these responses with an open mind, sometimes clarifying my intentions, but I'm hardly ever offended by criticism about my art or storytelling abilities. I want to improve. It's not quite a chat group on-line, nor are my readers columnists however I'm hoping to give the impression of some sort of dialogue going on not only between myself and my readers but with each other. I've been grateful for this kind of support. The content and direction of my book has been shaped by my responsive audience.

And that's the kind of thing I like about the UFO. That's why, for better or worse, I offer my comments here on other people's books, and of course, just my opinions. Take 'em for what they are worth!

Summer is coming and I'm taking a break from teaching my comic book course. I want to do painting and spend more time outdoors doing landscape drawings. And Tales of Fantasy? You bet! In fact right now I'm inking a couple Madame Boogala tales for #66.

The UFO continues on its merry way. Thank you Rob Imes for keeping everything going, and even though we have the Facebook page I feel I can really expound (meaning "blab on") in this column. Best to everyone!

"Advice, Techniques, and Monsters with my Poached Eggs!"
By Jason Bullock

I am glad to be able to contribute to this issue of T-Frags, the newsletter of the United Fanzine Organization . I hope everyone had great experiences during May with Free Comic Book Day. I had the opportunity to give out three new mini-comics from my studio at several library events that day promoting literacy to many new young readers.

Ever expanding my own education and skills with writing and drawing, I took time to read several articles and a new periodical put out by our industry peers this month. I came away with some great points of self criticism, exploration, and techniques to improve my work. I wanted to share a few of those insights with our readers before jumping into the UFO reviews for this edition of the newsletter.

1. Living in the moment when drawing is a great experience. You may lose track of time but your have been communicating your ideas to others visually as best you can. In public, drawing brings a crowd.

2. On drawing dynamic figures, the secret to this technique is to move the torso as far away from the pelvis as possible without making the figure look frightening. The trick to drawing convincingly 2-D into the illusion of 3-D is by breaking the plane. Foreshortening creates the illusion of a bent arm going back into space when done correctly.

3. On using shadows, focus on what you want to accomplish with the shadow, not drawing all the character say the hair for example. Just draw tufts or clips of it leaving the rest in shadow or with the nose drawing one of the nostrils leaving the other in shadow.

4. On drawing clothes, you should look at the folds and tugs of the cloth like on your drapes. Seek out the point of tension on the body and allow the folds in the clothing follow that point.

5. On designing costumes, people tend to hate anything new or changed on a character established. You have to go for the core elements that are central to the look of the costume then freely delete or change the things that look dated. Always look at the previous designs to work from and improve upon.

6. On layouts and comic design, comics are really about taking images to tell stories. All other elements are secondary to the central request. Ask yourself what are you trying to say through a picture? What are you trying to communicate? Start with light gesture drawing on the page at first focusing on rounded shapes that convey every movement more than detail. Start constructing bodies, heads to torsos to arms to silhouettes. Focus on solid form using negative space, overlapping depth. You must make sure your

proportions are correct and that the lines are on the right planes. You can always erase and re-do, erase, and re-do. Practice makes perfect.

So far we have had a couple of UFO releases to enjoy over the beginning of Spring. Larry Johnson's Number 64 issue of **Tales of Fantasy** is the first one. We are treated to the pencils of Larry Johnson and the inks of Dan Burke on "Tales of the B.S.I.". The ascension of the Automan 6000 onto the scene once Dr. Carbone and Dr. Brown move through the Brookstone Scientific Institute. The cause and effect story unfolds for reader to take away their own introspective from the story. The inks, done digitally we are informed , are a little too overwhelming on some the scenes with the building blazing. The use of more negative space with the flames themselves could have enhanced the feeling of heat as the firestorm blazed through the building. Still a good job. We also got to experience "The Growth" and "Not SchoolWork" with a few archived pieces annexed to them. Fan letters are available at the back of the issue to share the opinions of technique and criticism from previous issues. You can get your copy of Tales of Fantasy , No 64 by contacting Larry Johnson at *LewBrown75@yahoo.com* .

Next was Rob Imes' **Ditkomania** #93. The color cover, front and back are awesome! I thoroughly enjoyed the back cover of Gorgo in the duck pond scenario. Very funny! This issue was printed as the result of a Kickstarter support drive which helped print 350 copies. Our primary subject , Steve Ditko's work, focuses attention in this issue on his stint with the monster craze of Gorgo and Konga. Reviews of Gorgo, Konga, and even Kunga, his lesser known cousin are featured firstly in this issue. The fact that Kirk Kimball's educates us on the origin of Konga is great. Konga came from Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's world gives the readers even more specific ties between the 1950s and 1990s sci-fi movies. That link is Michael Gough. The best line in the Konga movie is right after Konga's murder spree.

"What are you having with your poached eggs", she asks, " Murder!?"

Gough replies, without missing a beat, "Margaret if there's one thing I can't abide is hysterics. Especially in the morning."

Such cheese!!! I love it. I love it B-Rated, smothered, covered, and chunked right into the script!

You can get your copy of Ditkomania #93 by contacting Rob Imes at *robimes@yahoo.com* for all the details. Enjoy!

In conclusion, I hope that everyone takes a moment to truly enjoy the experiences of both these releases. I also hope you will take away from my article some more insights into expanding your artistic techniques whether penciling, inking, or lettering. We all have areas to expand and grow as artists or writers. In the next article, I will review a few key literary tools that will address the growth of my fellow comic writers. Till then… ciao!

- **Jason Bullock** email:
Herocentralstudio@gmail.com

NOZ NOTES

by Rob Imes

I don't think I've written a good letter of comment about Larry Johnson's ***Tales of Fantasy*** in quite a while. But I always enjoy receiving and reading his comic, and the latest issue (#64) was no exception. The opening story's one-word title ("Robot"), about a killing machine, made me wonder if Larry was inspired by the *Doctor Who* episode with that same title (that introduced Tom Baker as the 4th Doctor). I don't recall Larry ever mentioning being a *Who* fan, however, so perhaps it's just a coincidence.

Dan Burke's high-contrast black-and-white inks were certainly striking, and were effective for the most part. Overall I think Dan did an impressive job.

I'll be mailing to Larry shortly a proper letter of comment (some of which I've already begun writing) about this issue. In short, though, another fine issue!

(The following two pieces are slightly revised versions of posts that I wrote on the UFO Members Only Facebook group. I share them here because I thought they would make for interesting reading for those who like to know more about the nuts & bolts of zine-publishing -- and putting them here in print perhaps gives them a more permanent form than an internet post.)

RESULTS OF THE KICKSTARTER FOR DITKOMANIA #93 *(May 9, 2014)*

I thought I'd give a rundown again of how my **Kickstarter** did, and about how much it cost to print up the new issue. This wasn't the best week for publishing *DM*, since it hit home how high the costs are.

To start with, my Kickstarter for *DM* #93 brought in $743 from 79 backers. (Of those backers, it looks so far like 28 or so were from people who had never ordered *DM* before, which is good. One of the goals of the Kickstarter, aside from bringing in much-needed cash, was to bring in new readers.)

From that $743, after Kickstarter takes their cut, I received a total of $667.17. It took around 24 hours to transfer money from Amazon Payments (which is what Kickstarter uses) to my bank account. (Unfortunately, I let around $200 of that amount sit in my Amazon Payments account until the morning of printing up my issue. Since my printing bill was higher than expected, I ended up getting an overdraft fee from my bank for $35 yesterday -- ouch! If I'd been smarter, I would have transferred it there a couple days earlier.)

Because I thought I had more money to play with, and was going to the trouble of making a thick (48-page) issue with a color cover, I decided to print up 350 copies of this issue. (In the past, the most I've printed of one issue has been 300 copies, if memory serves. Ah, for the days of printing up only 200 copies...!! It was so much simpler then!)

Unfortunately, my printing costs has gone up a little. It used to be that I could get a double-sided B&W sheet for 8 cents (as long as I got over a hundred of it), but now it's gone up to 10 cents each. Which isn't much, unless you have a LOT of sheets to print. I had eleven interior B&W double-sided sheets to print, at 350 each. Even without a calculator you can see that that's over $350 right there, not counting tax and not counting the 350 color covers.

In the end my total printing bill yesterday came to $545.90 (including tax) to make 350 copies of *DM* #93. That breaks down to $1.56 per copy -- quite a bit higher than I had expected. (I thought it would be more like $1.00 per copy, maybe $1.25 per copy.)

However, I'm still good because my take-home payment from the Kickstarter had been $667.17. If you subtract my printing bill from my Kickstarter payment, you have $121.27 left over. That is what is left to actually mail out the things -- which actually isn't that much money to play with considering that each issue will probably cost a dollar to mail (if I'm lucky). I have several overseas buyers, and their copies will cost $3.00 each to mail. (And I have around 20 people having it shipped overseas... Ouch!)

This experience has made me consider the option of a print-on-demand service like **ComixWellSpring** (which is semi-local, meaning I could pick it up, eliminating a P&H charge). According to their website at *http://www.grekoprinting.com/printing-on-demand-2/comic-books/prices/* a 48-page B&W comic-size publication would be $2.20 each. (That is the option of not having an ad for them on the back, and

for 350 copies. Give them an ad and the price drops to $2.00 each.)

Print-on-demand would have been particularly helpful for this issue (#93) because it contains a long, heavily-visual article by blogger Robby Reed about KONGA which contains many photos from the film. Printed out on a xerox machine (as *DM* is), these B&W images get awfully gray and muddy-looking. (Robby did provide me with a color version of his article for the PDF version.) One of my goals in putting out *DM* is to show the viability of small-press, even micro-press publishing -- how anyone can do it (and should do it) themselves. So it doesn't help that argument when the images look muddy -- drawing attention to the fact that they are mere xeroxes and would look superior on a computer screen or a fancy (and thus more expensive) print-on-demand publication.

I could have put the images on a thumbdrive (like I did the color cover) and see if the copier store that I use could have printed out Robby's article directly from that (like they did the color cover) -- for better reproduction in the issue (instead of the published issue being a xerox of my print-out of his PDF). But his article runs 14 pages (or 16, for magazine layout) and there would have been a much higher risk of error (if they put the wrong images in the wrong order, on the wrong pages, etc.) that I didn't want to risk.

All of this has caused me to consider raising the price of *DM*. Since early 2008, it has been $2.50 postpaid in the USA. Most of that time, it was 32 pages each (counting the B&W covers). However, out of the last four issues (counting this new issue), #90-93, two of those issues have had color covers and only one of those issues was less than 40 pages. I haven't charged subscribers for the extra cost -- it's just been a bonus for being a subscriber that one receives the thicker issues for the same price as the thinner ones -- however, if the trend has been to have thicker issues and color covers, then I should raise the price to reflect that instead of always taking the hit myself (especially now that there are a lot more people receiving each issue than there was back in 2008, when I was able to print up 200 copies and still have plenty left over to sell later).

I hate raising the price much, though, and I would like to keep open the option of thinner issues with B&W covers when I feel like it, so I'm planning on simply a 50-cent price hike for any new U.S. subscribers. That would mean $3.00 per issue, postpaid, instead of $2.50 per issue, postpaid. And probably a 50-cent raise on the international orders as well.

[I did end up raising the subscription price of DM, as can be seen on the UFO webpage. I wrote a subsequent post about this, part of which can be read below.]

This issue has been a bit of a demoralizing experience because of all the work involved, and spending more money than what the Kickstarter took in.

I am still folding sheets. After this experience, I have decided that I will never, ever again publish an issue that has this many pages (48 pgs) at this many copies made (350 copies each). The work is just too time-consuming and tiresome for one person -- who has better ideas about how he wants to spend his life than spending hours hunched over a table folding endless sheets of paper.

Thus, my goal for *DM* -- at least until issue #99 -- is to continue the previous format of 28-page B&W issues, preferably at a maximum of 250 copies if possible.

But after #99, I am thinking that with #100-onward there ought to be a format change. I recently received a copy of Don Ensign's **BLUE BOY CHRONICLES #1** from Russ Ensign, and I am thinking that is an ideal format for *DM* #100 -- and perhaps for #101 & beyond, too. The cover price of *DM* would skyrocket, but not everyone is a cheapskate like me, and it would at least save me the hassle of folding & stapling hundreds of copies. I think that once you get past the 300-copy print run for a thick zine, it makes sense to have a print-on-demand company print it. The past 7 days have been more tiring than inspiring, and I don't want to relive it anytime soon.

Here's a rundown of my expenses so far:

Total printing cost (for 350 copies): $545.90.
Postage cost on 5-9-14: $61.00.
Postage cost on 5-13-14: $56.39.
Postage cost on 5-15-14: $127.08.

Thus, the total postage cost (so far) comes to $244.47. I still have around $30 worth of DM #93's to mail out, which will have to wait until Monday when I am able to get to the post office again, and when I'll have the money in my account to mail them.

So, anticipating that upcoming $30 (which could go higher, but let's just say $30 for now), my total costs for printing & mailing DM #93 look to be $820.37. Plus I had to spend around $28 for a box of 250 manila envelopes. So, the grand total is almost $850. Yikes!!

BEHIND THE SCENES LAST ISSUE
(March 29, 2014)

I thought it would be informative, since I just printed up and mailed out *TF* #233, to give a rundown of the costs that were involved. I write all this out not to show how expensive it is, or out of a sense of complaint (since I could easily reduce expenses by printing & mailing fewer copies, if I wanted to) but simply to give a behind-the-scenes glimpse of what I've been doing as Chairman and editor of the newsletter.

The new issue, *TF* #233, is a 32-page digest-size zine with B&W interiors and a yellow cardstock cover. I printed up 50 copies of the issue.

My printing bill (including tax) for *TF* #233 was $37.10. (That breaks down to $7.00 for the 50 yellow cardstock sheets; $28.00 for the 350 interior sheets (7 sheets @50 cents each = 350 sheets); and $2.10 tax.

On Friday I mailed out 34 copies of the issue, to 34 people (all located in the U.S., except Dave Sim in Canada). Postage was 70 cents for each issue (except for Sim, postage was $1.15). My total cost (of just the postage stamps) to mail out *TF* #233 to 34 people was $24.95.

Total cost of printing ($37.10) AND postage ($24.95) comes to $62.05.

I still have 16 copies left of *TF* #233 on hand which I can sell on eBay, etc. to recover some of my costs. In all likelihood, though, many of them will be given away to potential applicants, etc.

I printed up more than usual of *TF* #233 because I figure that some of Don Ensign's friends may want to obtain a copy. (A couple of the 34 that were sent out on Friday were sent to friends of Don, such as Don's pastor and also Don's longtime friend Ralph Miley). I made the mistake of printing too few copies of a previous issue (#227) where I ran out of extra copies shortly after it was printed (and thus didn't have a copy of that issue available when Dan Burke wanted to buy one).

Last issue [#232] I printed up 40 copies of *TF*, and the issue before that I printed up 30 copies. I still have a few of those left on hand, that I can sell at a future date. I am thinking that it may be best to only print up around 30 copies of each issue, depending on the nature of the issue. (Obviously if something special is in the issue, the print run should be adjusted accordingly.) I could, of course, just print off issues as needed, but I like to print issues that are true first editions, which perhaps could enhance their collectibility somewhere along the road.

There is the matter that I am still mailing out copies of *TF* to people that apparently have no intention of joining, which seems a bit foolish on my part. On the other hand, these are people that I tend to send *Ditkomania* to as well, regardless of whether they've paid for a copy or not. I should probably cull the list of some folks but each time I print a new issue, I find it hard to leave them out of the fun. However that isn't fair to those who are paying to receive *TF*, such as dues-paying UFO members.

I also send copies to people that I trade zines with, so mailing them a copy of *TF* actually helps me out trading-wise.

In his column [in #233], Larry Johnson asked whether the annual dues cost of $20 (which was set around 20 years ago) should be increased. I don't think so, despite the expense involved in printing & mailing out the newsletter as detailed above. If I wanted to, I could cut back the number of copies I print and mail to only the current members and those who have work in the issue.

If I had printed up only 15 copies of TF #233, for example, my printing bill would have been around $11 and the postage cost would have been $10.50. Thus it would have cost me a total of only $21.50 to print & mail out 15 copies of the issue. Since annual dues are $20, and there are seven dues-paying members (including me), that gives me $140 per year to spend. If I printed & mailed only 15 copies of each TF, six times per year, that comes to a grand total of $129 per year that I'd have spent -- less than the $140 dues amount that I'd received from the members for the year. (Ignoring for now the cost of envelopes, staples, etc.)

I've spent almost half the annual dues received on this one issue alone, but *1.)* it was a special case (50 copies is 10-20 copies more than I normally print) and *2.)* I am willing to do so for my own benefit (trading zines, selling them later, showing off what I've printed to friends, etc.). I can see myself cutting back on the amount of freebie copies in the future, though, to save on unnecessary expenses. At the present time, it's not an undue burden to me and I get satisfaction out of showing people what we are doing in the UFO when they receive a copy of the newsletter in the mail.

Increasing the amount of members in the group would help to bring in more annual dues money. If you know of anyone who you'd like to see in the UFO, please let me know and I will mail them a copy of *T-Frags* for free. If you have anyone in mind, let me know their contact info and I'll mail them a copy. Thanks! -- *R. Imes*

The UFO CHECKLIST

The United Fanzine Organization (UFO) is a co-op of small-press comics publishers and creators dedicated to setting a higher standard of quality in independent and alternative press. The members mutually aid each other in the promotion and production of their own publications. Any small-press publisher interested in applying for membership in the UFO should contact the UFO Chairman: **Rob Imes, 13510 Cambridge #307, Southgate, MI 48195** or you can email him at ***robimes@yahoo.com*** The official UFO website: *http://unitedfanzineorganization.weebly.com*

TETRAGRAMMATON FRAGMENTS!! #233: This is the UFO Newsletter, the central forum for UFO members, containing columns and artwork that can't be found anywhere else. 32 digest-size B&W pages for **$2.50** postpaid in the USA from **Rob Imes, 13510 Cambridge #307, Southgate, MI 48195** or you can email him at ***robimes@yahoo.com*** for more info.

DITKOMANIA #93: This issue of the fanzine devoted to Steve Ditko features the Charlton movie monsters Gorgo and Konga! A 48-page B&W digest-size fanzine for **$3.00** postpaid from **Rob Imes** (address above).

FANTASY THEATER #23: A Lady Spectra and Lizard Man team-up by **Steven Myers** and **J. Kevin Carrier**, plus another adventure of the female barbarian Glorianna by **J. K. Carrier**. A 56-page B&W digest-size comic (with color covers) available in print for **$3.50** from ***www.indyplanet.com*** and also available digitally for **99¢** from ***www.indyplanet.com/digital***

HERO CENTRAL UNIVERSE #10/11: Special double-issue of this action epic featuring mythic modern heroes. 44-page B&W digest-size comic (with color cover) for **$6.00** from **Jason Bullock, P. O. Box 2684, Loganville, GA 30052**. Email ***herocentralstudio@gmail.com*** for more info or visit HCU on the web at **http://www.herocentral.org**

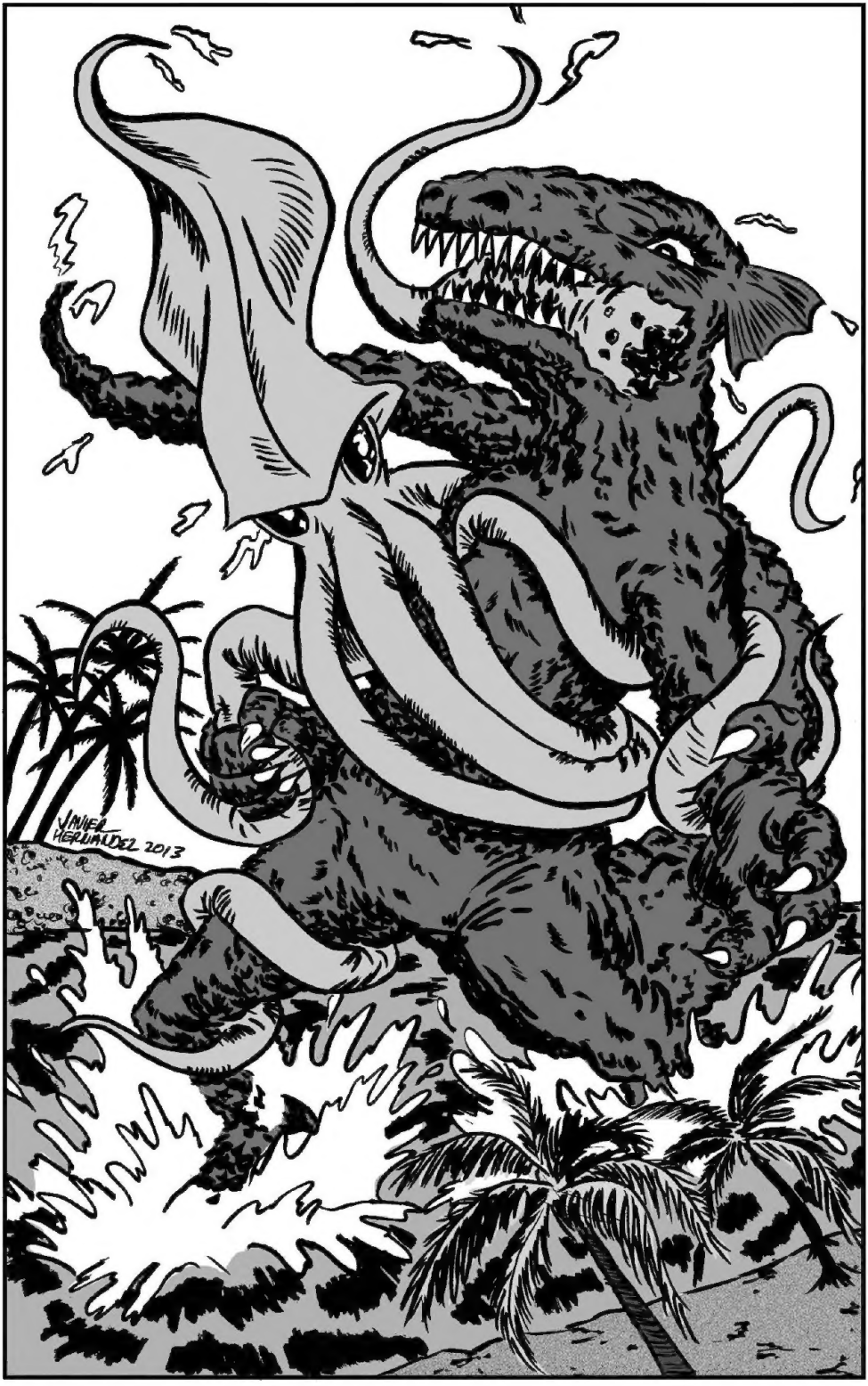
HERO CENTRAL JUNIOR #2: Still available: A 16-page full color digest comic for **$2.50** from **Jason Bullock** (address directly above).

THE IMAGINATION LINK #48: Alan Sissom's long-running fanzine joins the UFO with this new issue! A horror prose tale; a 6-page comic strip; and a history of the *Collectors Club Newsletter*. 24-page B&W digest-size zine (with color covers) for **$3.50** postpaid from **Alan Sisson P. O. Box 92, Whiteland, IN 46184** or email ***a1960boomer@yahoo.com***

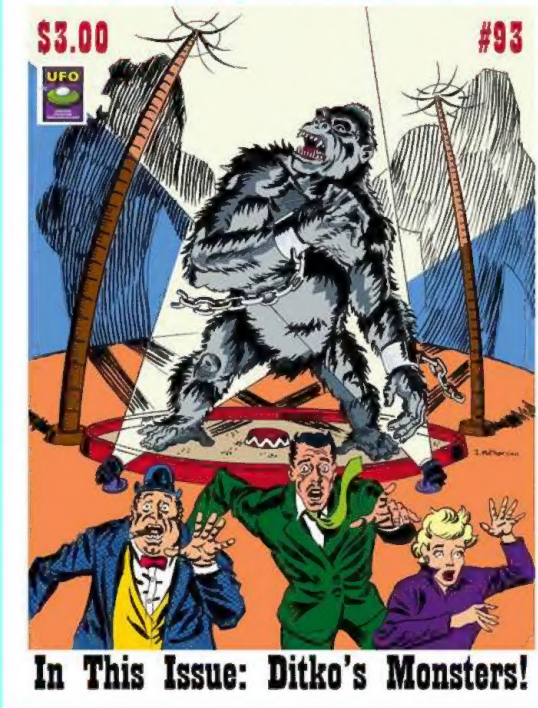
TALES OF FANTASY #63: This special issue commemorates the 50th anniversary of ZOOY, with a never-before-seen adventure from 1964! 52-page B&W digest with color covers (and centerspread) for **$3.00** postpaid in the USA from **Larry Johnson, 31 Greenbrook Rd., Hyde Park, MA 02136**. Email ***LewBrown75@yahoo.com*** or visit **www.LarryJohnsonartist.com**

TALES OF FANTASY #64: *"Tales of the BSI"* leads off this issue as a robot attacks, in a story inked by Dan Burke. There's also a fantasy short by Larry Johnson, who also has an autobiographical strip about cartooning in his high school days. Plus: a 9-page letters column! A 44-page B&W comic (with color cover) for **$3.00** postpaid from **Larry Johnson** (address above).

THE DAMNED THING Vol. 2 #1: The return of the zine devoted to horror! This issue contains articles on M. R. James, Clive Barker, the 1934 movie *The Black Cat*, and more! Available for **$5.00** postpaid from **Sam Gafford, 624 Metacom Ave., #103, Warren, RI 02885**. Email: ***lordshazam@yahoo.com***


JAVIER HERNANDEZ 2013

DITKOMANIA



The new issue of the comics fanzine devoted to STEVE DITKO has been released!

This issue's theme is DITKO'S MONSTERS with articles about GORGO and KONGA!

Available for $3.00 postpaid in the USA from:

Rob Imes
13510 Cambridge #307
Southgate, MI 48195

More ordering details (and subscription rates) can be found at http://unitedfanzineorganization.weebly.com/ditkomania.html

ALAN
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